

Preface

The North Carolina Crop Improvement Association was organized 49 years ago as the State's official seed certifying agency. As the 50th anniversary approaches, it seems timely that a record be made of the organization's objectives and accomplishments. The seed certification program, which was started in 1929, insures quality seed and trueness to name of seed of improved varieties.

A complete record of all accomplishments is not possible because of the extensive growth of the Crop Improvement Association and the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, a cooperating agency that celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1977. We hope, however, that the information assembled here will be helpful to an understanding of seed certification and its role in agricultural production.

The importance of seed purity, viability, and vigor can best be appreciated in terms of the improvement in crop performance brought about by the use of high-quality seed. Because seed quality is an important factor, good seed must be made available to farmers. The Crop Improvement Association was established to insure this availability. The Association has found a good way to increase the supply of seed of new varieties, as these varieties become available through breeding programs, and to insure that farmers are able to obtain this seed. The organization has also assumed responsibility for keeping farmers informed about sources of improved seed and has encouraged the use of this seed.

Perhaps the Association's most important contribution has been the development of a program for certifying seed of improved varieties. The organization has also cooperated in the development of the Official Variety Testing Program for performance testing of these new and improved varieties and in the formation of the North Carolina Foundation Seed Producers, Inc., as the recognized organization for the production and distribution of Foundation seed of the improved varieties.

The authors, G. K. Middleton and Foil W. McLaughlin, have both been closely associated with the Crop Improvement Association. Middleton worked with the organization from its inception in 1929 until 1945, with the exception of a 2-year period. His first 6 years were devoted largely to field inspection, a job that really acquaints the worker with the problems. He spent the latter 6 years as director while carrying a load of research problems, which limited the time he could give to the Association. Foil W. McLaughlin has been working with the Association since 1948, first as field inspector and then as assistant director and director in charge. He has been associated with the organization during its period of rapid growth.

Many other organizations support the work of the Crop Improvement Association. Several persons in the Agricultural Experiment Station were asked to write a few pages concerning their work in plant breeding to help clarify the importance of the development of improved varieties of the various farm crops.

This book tells the interesting story of the Crop Improvement Association. It is an accurate and detailed statement of the Association's organization and accomplishments. Knowing what this group of North Carolina farmers and seedsmen has done makes it easy to appreciate the contribution the Association has made to agriculture in the State.